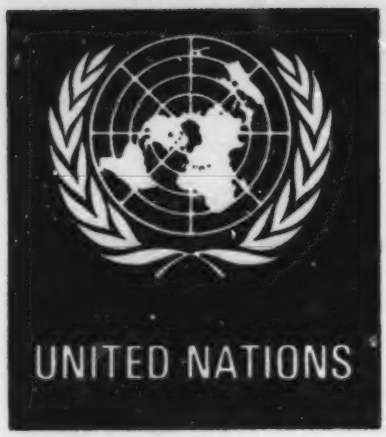

DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN SUPPORT OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Nicosia
16 and 17 April 2002

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1-7	3
II.	Opening statements	8-40	4
III.	Plenary sessions	41-70	11
	Plenary I.	41-50	11
	Plenary II.	51-59	13
	Plenary III.	60-70	15
IV.	Closing session	71-74	18

Annexes

I.	The Nicosia Declaration	20
II.	Statement by the Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	23
III.	List of participants	24

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held in Nicosia on 16 and 17 April 2002, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 56/33 and 56/34 of 3 December 2001.

2. The Committee was represented at the meeting by a delegation comprising Papa Louis Fall (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Ravan A.G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Walter Balzan (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Sotirios Zackheos (Cyprus).

3. The Meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were "The Occupied Palestinian Territory since September 2000", "International efforts at containing the crisis and resuming the peace dialogue" and "The urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State".

4. Presentations were made by 12 experts, including Palestinians and Israelis. Kamai Al-Sharafi, member of the Palestinian Council, and Gabi Baramki, President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace, had accepted the invitation by the Committee, but were unable to travel to Nicosia due to the Israeli closure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In a statement issued on 15 April 2002, the Committee delegation noted with utmost dismay that arbitrary action of the Israeli authorities had deprived the participants of first-hand accounts of the situation on the ground and their assessments of the current crises and issued a statement denouncing the Israeli policy of closures and other forms of collective punishment of the Palestinian people (see annex II). Representatives of 52 Governments, Palestine, 4 intergovernmental organizations, 8 United Nations bodies and 31 civil society organizations, as well as special guests of the host country and representatives of the media and academic institutions attended the Meeting.

5. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, H.E. Mr. Papa Louis Fall, and the delegation of the Committee were received by H.E. Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and H.E. Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, both of whom stressed the importance of supporting peace in the Middle East at the current extremely difficult stage and welcomed the efforts of the Committee in that regard. The Committee delegation expressed its deep appreciation of the active and constructive role played by Cyprus, a member of the Committee since its inception, in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

6. On the second day of the Meeting, the Chairman of the Committee and other members of the Committee delegation met with representatives of Cypriot women's organizations, who presented a letter deploring the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory caused by the Israeli military aggression and calling for the immediate implementation of the respective Security Council resolutions. The Chairman expressed the Committee's appreciation for the work of civil society, in particular of women's organizations, and said that their concerns were reflected in the Committee's programme of work.

7. The main points of the discussion were highlighted in the Nicosia Declaration, the final document of the Meeting (see annex I).

II. Opening statements

8. **Ioannis Kasoulides**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, said that Cyprus, as a neighbouring State with long bonds of friendship with the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, was particularly pained by the seemingly never-ending cycle of violence that had tormented the two peoples over the years. The most important lesson that could be drawn from the recent upsurge of violence was the impact of security concerns on the peace process, and the realization that without political negotiations offering the prospect for an end to the occupation and the creation of a viable, independent Palestinian State, the prospects of a secure Middle East were dim and distant. Both parties must find the political courage to look for ways to achieve both aims. The international community should also stay engaged and find the appropriate means, as warranted by the situation and the behaviour of the parties, to put an end to the bloodshed and to return to the negotiating table. In that regard, he expressed Cyprus' strong support for the immediate implementation of Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) and the non-selective and comprehensive implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Plan, as well as for the efforts of the "Quartet".

9. He urged Israel to withdraw from the areas occupied by its troops earlier and to desist from extrajudicial executions, attacks on medical and humanitarian institutions and personnel. Moreover, Israel should stop any settlement activities, which were a clear violation of international law. Israel should fully respect international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions and accept the dispatch of an international force with extended powers to reflect the new situation on the ground. He called for respect for and the protection of all religious sites. Equally, his Government condemned any form of terrorism and urged an immediate end to that practice.

10. He expressed full sympathy to President Yasser Arafat, the legitimate leader and elected representative of the Palestinian people, with a vital role to play in the peace process. He called upon Israel to lift the siege of the Palestinian Authority's headquarters in Ramallah and restore President Arafat's freedom of movement. He welcomed the resolution of the recent meeting of the Arab League in Beirut aiming at a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict that would bring stability to the region, ensure normal relations; and the safety and security of all countries in the region and would put an end to the violence.

11. **Kofi Annan**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a message read out on his behalf by his representative, Karen Koning AbuZayd, Deputy Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), said that the recent sharp escalation of violence underscored the seriousness and potential dangers not only for the Palestinians and Israelis, but also for the region and beyond. The latest Israeli operation in the Palestinian territory had greatly damaged the Palestinian Authority and its institutions, gravely weakening their capacity to provide basic services. International humanitarian principles and human rights standards had been widely flouted by Israeli forces. Equally, he had condemned as morally repugnant suicide bombings and other violence against civilians. He emphasized that military action would not bring a solution. The core problems of occupation, violence including terrorism, and economic distress remained and must be solved before the conflict could end.

12. Kofi Annan commended the peace initiative endorsed in March 2002 by the Arab Summit, charting a path for normal relations between Israel and the Arab world in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since June 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem. He also recalled the recent resolutions adopted by the Security Council and stated that efforts to de-escalate the crisis and secure a ceasefire must be made concurrently with action on the political front. What was urgently needed was the political will for concrete and concerted action. Both Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat should exercise their leadership with an

enhanced sense of responsibility and moral authority. They were duty-bound to bring their people back from the edge of the abyss.

13. He said that peace and security must be addressed in parallel. The legitimate security concerns of Israel and the legitimate political aspirations of the Palestinians should be guaranteed at the same time. He was now of the view that guarantees could not be provided in the absence of third-party mechanisms on the ground. Such a mechanism could take the shape of international monitors of a ceasefire. No matter what form it took, it was essential to restoring mutual confidence and making progress on both the political and the security fronts. The co-sponsors and other international parties should take coherent and forceful steps to restore the political process and assist the Israelis and Palestinians in reaching a fair and viable agreement. At the same time, a massive assistance programme was urgently needed to allow the Palestinians to rebuild their lives and households. He pledged that the United Nations would continue its work of rehabilitating the Palestinian economy, with an immediate focus on providing effective emergency assistance to the Palestinian people. He called upon the donor community and particularly the Arab States to preserve, strengthen and assist the Palestinian Authority, including through efforts to rebuild its infrastructure, security and governance capacity.

14. **Papa Louis Fall**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, pointed out that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, remained extremely tense and volatile. Recent reports from Jenin had profoundly shocked the international community, while the siege of the Church of the Nativity continued inexorably in Bethlehem. He expressed alarm at the intensifying Israeli attacks on the Palestinian Authority, its institutions and leadership. Methodically, the occupying Power had been trying to disassemble its physical infrastructure, intimidate, arrest and assassinate its members and bring to a halt its activities in many areas. The life of Chairman Arafat, besieged in his Ramallah headquarters, had been placed in real danger. The international community should not allow this to happen and should stand up for the democratically elected and internationally recognized Palestinian leadership. The Committee was also concerned at the rapid disintegration of the Palestinian economy as a result of restrictive Israeli policies. While the Committee welcomed the economic support of donor States and organizations, only a normalization of the situation could bring about a long-term solution.

15. The Committee joined the world community's condemnation of attacks on civilians, regardless of the provenance of such attacks. In view of the highly provocative actions of the occupying Power and its disrespect for United Nations resolutions and the norms of international humanitarian law, the Committee supported the idea of a third-party presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, i.e. the deployment of an international protection mechanism. The heart of the question of Palestine was the illegal occupation by Israel, the illegal settlement activity and other illegal actions of the occupying Power.

16. He commended the Security Council for adopting resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002 which, for the first time, referred to a vision where two States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side within secure and recognized borders; and resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) which called for the parties to reach a meaningful ceasefire and for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities. He noted the increased United States involvement towards achieving a ceasefire and paving the way for implementation of the Mitchell Committee recommendations. He recalled the peace initiative by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, which served as the basis for the Arab Peace Plan adopted in Beirut by the Arab League Summit. The promising dynamic created by those developments, however, was yet to be translated into tangible steps on the ground. In conclusion, he stressed that the international community had a moral obligation to help the parties out of the current crisis and back to the negotiating table in order to complete the historic journey they had embarked on in Madrid in 1991. A great deal of work was required to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards all

aspects of the question of Palestine until it was resolved in a satisfactory manner, in accordance with international legitimacy, and until all the rights of the Palestinian people were fully realized.

17. **Nabil Shaath**, Minister for Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestinian Authority, representative of Palestine, expressed its appreciation to the United Nations for maintaining its support of the Palestinian people until it achieves its inalienable rights. It was high time to forge forward towards a final settlement of the question; it was time to end the Israeli occupation. The systematic destruction of Palestinian institutions and infrastructure was devastating. The Israelis had destroyed the airport, a symbol of the Oslo process, and the Gaza harbour, and with it Palestinian hopes for international trade. After stealing the more advanced equipment, the Israelis had destroyed the statistics bureau, educational establishments and other institutions. The educational system had been shattered. Demolition of the water system had nothing to do with security, but was meant to humiliate the Palestinian people and reflected the Israeli greed to take over all the water, beyond the 82 per cent they had already confiscated.

18. He referred to an interview the Israeli Prime Minister had given the previous day to *CNN* and said that Mr. Sharon had been defending his actions, even denying that Israel had occupied the territories, claiming that Israel had liberated its territories from the Arabs in 1948, thus denying the very existence of the Palestinian people. There were 250,000 Palestinians living in Israel today considered to be " present absentees". Jerusalemite Arabs were being discriminated against, losing their right of residence and being stripped of their identity cards. Israeli policies amounted to ethnic cleansing. Mr. Sharon did not want to withdraw. Mr. Sharon would continue his assault until he achieved his objectives. He was the jury, judge and executioner. Mr. Shaath condemned the numerous summary executions of Palestinians committed by Israel, despite the fact that it did not have the death penalty itself.

19. Referring to the most recent developments, Mr. Shaath said that the massacre at Jenin was a war crime. As in Sabra and Shatila, Mr. Sharon had said that reports of the massacre were a lie. The Israelis had taken six days to complete the massacre and six more days to clean it up. Quiet diplomacy did not always work; sometimes shouting out was required. Mr. Shaath did not believe that the majority of the Israeli people were backing Mr. Sharon; the Israelis must be able to hear the international outcry. Formulating four demands for ending the current crisis, he said that Israel needed to end its siege and would have to withdraw from Area A. Secondly, there was a need for an international force on the ground to monitor the ceasefire and to protect both the Palestinian and the Israeli people. Broad international assistance was required to rebuild the Palestinian institutions, including the security apparatus. Finally, there was a need to return to negotiations on a permanent settlement on the basis of the new Arab initiative endorsed at the Beirut Summit. A conference convened under the dictates of Mr. Sharon, even deciding on the Palestinian delegation and while Palestinian cities were under siege, was not acceptable.

20. Statements were also made by representatives of Governments and intergovernmental organizations. The representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the OIC, Abdelouahed Belkeziz, said that the massacres perpetrated by the Israelis needed to be recorded to serve as vivid testimony to Israel's clear violation of human rights. Those criminal acts needed to be the concern of the Palestinian Rights Committee not only through the convening of symposia but by bringing them forward for international examination. Institutionalized State terrorism must be exposed and condemned. Extrajudicial killings, helicopters that targeted civilians, the killing of stone-throwing children, the destruction of residences over the heads of their owners and the denial of medical help to the wounded were all part of the picture. The international community needed to ensure that States that condoned such acts were subjected to international sanctions to prevent their continuation. There must be a multinational force on the ground. He expressed the hope that the Committee would continue and intensify its work towards the objectives assigned to it by the General Assembly.

21. The representative of the League of Arab States said that history was repeating itself. Palestinians were seeing the same massacres that had taken place in Deir Yassin. The current generation must understand that it was Israel that had introduced terror into the region. Palestinians today were facing the most ferocious campaign of aggression. Houses were being destroyed over the heads of their owners and houses of worship were being desecrated. The Israelis did not hide their intentions to destroy any agreements entered into. Israeli practices and ideas were emptying the peace process of its contents and destroying the bases for agreement. Israeli actions had led to near paralysis of all aspects of life. The Israeli occupation, however, had failed to cause a collapse of morale. The secret weapon of the Palestinian people was its belief in justice. He pointed out that the Government of Mr. Sharon had rejected the peace initiative of the Arab Summit, preferring to use State terrorism to achieve its objectives. The Palestinian leadership had cooperated with international efforts at bringing peace to the area, but the Israeli leadership had continued to reject such efforts. It had ignored recent Security Council resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal, the foremost precondition for peace.

22. The representative of Indonesia condemned Israel's violations of international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The recent Security Council resolutions must be implemented. It was urgent to dispatch an international force to bring peace to those territories. The ongoing military incursions accompanied by repression would not bring security. Regrettably the peace process had been met with procrastination and new conditions by Israel. Israel's continued acquisition of land for settlements furthered the dismantling of the peace process. For the Arab peace plan to succeed there must be total withdrawal from all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

23. The representative of Brazil said his Government was following carefully the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. He urged the creation of an independent, economically viable Palestinian State. The Arab Summit on 28 March 2002 had taken an important step to bring about harmonious coexistence between the Israeli and Arab peoples. The deterioration of the situation in the region had reached unacceptable levels. The international community must act to stop the violence. There was no solution other than that established in international law. Combat against terrorism must be carried out within the rules of international law.

24. The representative of Ukraine stressed that the resort to violence by the Palestinians and to military force by the Israelis would not achieve their aims. To stop the cycle of violence and hatred, there had to be a political process. The Security Council resolutions must be immediately implemented. Israel must lift its siege of Chairman Arafat and provide unlimited access of humanitarian organizations to the territories. He called upon both parties to implement the Tenet work plan and to accept the recommendations of the "Quartet". Ukraine was willing to make a practical contribution to finding a solution. Ukraine remained convinced that an impartial monitoring mechanism was called for and urged the parties to accept it. It stood ready to participate in such a monitoring mechanism. Moreover, it had offered its good offices to the parties and proposed to host an international round table that would elaborate ways out of the current conflict, a proposal that had received support from both parties and a number of international parties.

25. The representative of Qatar said Israel had proved that it was not interested in pursuing peace; however, force would never bring about the security to which it aspired. Security and peace in the region would only become a reality if United Nations resolutions on the restoration of Palestinian rights were implemented. Israel's aggressions constituted terrorism against unarmed people and quick and effective action was urgent. The international community, especially the United States, the Russian Federation, the United Nations and the European Union, must shoulder its responsibility to halt the Israeli aggression. It must acquire protection for the unarmed Palestinian people and ensure security and stability in the Middle East.

26. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran said Jenin was the scene of the latest Israeli army atrocities illustrating that massacres were on the Israeli agenda. Israel trampled the basic principles of humanitarian law and defied the Declaration of Human Rights, challenging the entire international community. Only a punitive resolution that authorized sanctions and established a protective force to guarantee the protection of civilians would change the situation. The Committee should concentrate its work on the situation on the ground and on finding a way to stop the Israeli actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

27. The representative of Burkina Faso said the international community must think of all possible solutions to the conflict. The parties must sit and talk. The international community must force Israel to withdraw from the territories. When Israel had given in, as it must, an international force was needed to maintain peace and to protect civilians and the Palestinian Authority. At the current stage, a buffer force must be dispatched. It was unavoidable in any strategy capable of promoting peace.

28. The representative of Namibia condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. However, his Government supported legitimate acts of resistance against foreign occupation and aggression. The illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory, the oppression, the settlement activities and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people by the occupying Power were the root causes of violence and insecurity in the region. Unless they were removed, the situation would continue to deteriorate. He welcomed the Security Council's recent reassertion of its responsibility in the area. Unfortunately, Israel had chosen to ignore Council resolutions. To maintain its credibility, the Council must ensure that its resolutions were implemented immediately and without preconditions. If Israel did not withdraw its troops from Palestinian territory, the Council must consider taking appropriate measures against the Israeli Government. He supported the idea of an international observer force and urged the Council to move speedily to authorize the establishment of such a mission to protect the Palestinian civilians.

29. The representative of Tunisia said the Palestinian people continued to live in occupied territories, fearful of Israeli military attacks. He reiterated Tunisia's support and solidarity with the Palestinian people. It was clear that Israel's refusal to implement Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) and its continued onslaught on the territories was aimed at denying the Palestinian people their inalienable rights and hindering any initiative that would lead to a settlement on the basis of international legitimacy. He urged all peace-loving States and parties, especially the most influential parties on the international level, to force Israel to respect international law and Security Council resolutions. He requested those parties to use their influence to force Israel to comply with the recent resolution adopted by the Commission on Human Rights. The international community had to convince Israel that military action would not bring peace and that only negotiations would bring them hope.

30. The representative of China appealed to both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, the Israelis in particular, to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, to actively coordinate with the international community's peacemaking efforts, withdraw all of its troops from Palestinian territories and restart negotiations at an early date. A political solution through negotiations on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the land-for-peace principle was in accord with the fundamental interests of the people of all countries of the Middle East. China had consistently supported the Palestinian people in their just cause to restore their legitimate national rights. It had made every effort to urge Israel to implement relevant United Nations resolutions, terminate the military campaign against the Palestinian people and lift the siege of President Arafat immediately and unconditionally.

31. The representative of Hungary said a resolution of the Middle East conflict must provide for an independent, democratic Palestinian State with a viable economy and for comprehensive security for Israel, enabling the full normalization of its relations with all Arab States. Hungary supported the peace

plan of the Arab Summit. It had appealed to the Palestinian Authority to eradicate the terrorist organizations responsible for the attacks and to take measures against those involved. Israel had a right to safeguard the security of its frontiers and citizens, but it must observe international law and internationally recognized human rights. He urged Israel to end its offensive and called for the immediate withdrawal of its troops from the territories placed under Palestinian control, especially the town of Ramallah. He expressed concern over the destruction of the infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian economy.

32. The representative of Malaysia said the suicide bombings were not just acts of terror but acts of desperation carried out of frustration, hopelessness and despair. They could not be condoned, but they were as much a retaliation for the killing of Palestinians by the Israeli army as they were intended to draw international attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. If the acts of suicide bombers were condemned, however, one should also condemn acts of State terrorism as attested to by international observers. The ruthless onslaught to destroy the so-called "infrastructure of terror" was not likely to end the problem. The United Nations must continue to address the question of Palestine at every opportunity. The United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union must continue to play a facilitating role, however, in an even-handed approach. Moreover, it was important for the Palestinians to counter the myth that President Arafat had rejected at Camp David the best offer ever made by an Israeli leader.

33. The representative of Oman called upon participants to make suggestions on how to change the situation. The participants should recognize areas where they could promote and encourage effective steps towards achieving a permanent settlement to that tragic problem. They should send a strong message to Israel that no matter how long or how high the walls, or how deep the buffer zones it created, it would never have any security. The only way that Israel could be secure would be through the creation of a viable independent Palestinian State in the territories that it now illegally occupied.

34. The representative of Côte d'Ivoire said the settlement of the Middle East crisis must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and the principles agreed in Madrid. He also supported the Arab peace plan of 28 March 2002 and the most recent Security Council resolutions. Occupation could not in any way replace the necessity for diplomatic efforts to solve the problem. The Council had requested the cessation of all acts of violence and terror and called upon the Israelis to withdraw from Ramallah. Negotiations could only take place between authorities elected by their people, and the isolation of Yasser Arafat should end. The international community must recognize that words would not be enough; it must act.

35. The representative of the United Arab Emirates said the world had been witness to Israeli violations despite the attempts to cover up those crimes. Neither hospitals, holy sites nor agricultural lands had been spared. Refugee camps had been invaded and mass killings carried out. Israel was flouting all humanitarian principles. The Committee must move to stop Israel's crimes. Israel must withdraw its troops immediately. His Government strongly condemned Israel's aggression. He expressed support for the Palestinian people in their quest to exercise their legitimate rights. He asked for an international force to be immediately dispatched to the territories to protect the Palestinian people. It was important to put on trial the Israelis responsible for those crimes. He called upon influential States to continue to put political pressure on Israel in order to stop its aggression.

36. The representative of Belarus said the stability of the Middle East region was under threat. The use of force was leading nowhere, as military actions could only lead to an impasse. The excessive use of force against the Palestinian people was completely unacceptable. The United Nations had made it clear that the only way out of the current crisis was through political negotiations. The move should be towards a permanent political agreement based on United Nations resolutions. The Arab peace plan provided a major contribution to the peace efforts. He also welcomed the intervention of the co-sponsors of the peace process. He hoped that would lead to a cessation of violations. He stressed the importance

of the contribution of international organizations to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people and to assist the reconstruction efforts.

37. The representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said his agency was particularly concerned about the adverse impact of closures and prolonged curfews that severely restricted civilian access, particularly of women, to life-saving services. The inability of women in labour to reach health facilities had resulted in unattended births at checkpoints and even the deaths of some women and their infants. Restrictions on movement had prevented medical personnel from providing vital services and ambulances from evacuating those in urgent need of care. Since the outbreak of the intifada, UNFPA had adopted a two-track strategy: meeting the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people while maintaining development assistance. The Fund had channelled some $2.4 million worth of reproductive health equipment and commodities to help replenish the depleted supplies of the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations. More importantly, the agency had launched a joint initiative with the Ministry of Health to provide community-based maternal health services and emergency obstetric care. Some 100 physicians, midwives and nurses were being trained and equipped with clean delivery kits to provide such services to women in their own communities.

38. The representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) referred to a current report prepared by the Commission saying that the continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory and the delay in implementation of agreements and in settling all outstanding claims between the two parties continued to aggravate the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Those delays and the Israeli practices, particularly with regard to settlement expansion and closures, were among the primary causes of the outbreak of tensions and violence. Meanwhile, the percentage of Palestinian people living below the poverty line had reached alarming proportions. The Israeli settlements and the bypass roads had separated Palestinian communities and deprived Palestinians of agricultural land, thus fragmenting a whole people and its land. In effect, they foreclosed the possibility of a Palestinian State, as they destroyed the territorial integrity of the Palestinian territory. ESCWA was considering convening a series of meetings aimed at providing the international donor community and regional and international organizations with a blueprint for a reconstruction plan. Such an undertaking would assist the Palestinian Authority in ensuring a concerted effort in the process of economic rehabilitation in Palestine.

39. The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said the UNEP Governing Council at its seventh special session had adopted a decision entitled the "Environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories". The decision specified a series of UNEP follow-up actions to be carried out, including a visit by the Executive Director of UNEP to the area; preparation of a "desk" study outlining the state of the environment in the territories; identification of the major areas of environmental damage that required urgent action; and, as deemed necessary, field studies to propose remedial measures to improve the environmental situation in the territories. The Programme was in the process of implementing that decision and was ready to work with a wide range of stakeholders.

40. Participating NGOs submitted an urgent appeal to the Meeting demanding the immediate lifting of the siege of President Arafat; the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops and the lifting of all closures and checkpoints; the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping and monitoring force; and immediate access by humanitarian workers and non-governmental organizations to the West Bank and Gaza. It also called for an independent team of lawyers to be given access to all detainees and political prisoners, and an independent third-party investigative commission to investigate the destruction of the West Bank and Gaza Strip infrastructure, the killing of civilians and other Israeli crimes. Calling on the United States Administration to immediately cease its support of Israeli policies and on the European Union to stop procrastinating and implement sanctions against the policy of terror, the appeal demanded that the United Nations take immediate measures to compel the Israeli Government to accept and implement all relevant United Nations resolutions.

III. Plenary sessions

Plenary I
The Occupied Palestinian Territory since September 2000

41. Speakers in this plenary examined the security situation and the facts on the ground; the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the need for international protection of the Palestinian people; the impact of the conflict on the Palestinian Authority and its institutions; and the destruction of the Palestinian economy.

42. **Nabil Shaath**, Minister for Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestinian Authority, pointed out that the Israeli destruction of the Palestinian economy and the obstruction of economic progress had started well before September 2000. Exports and imports from other countries had been severely restricted. Any economy that was denied trade was denied development. Closures always had as one objective to delay Palestinian projects and the Palestinian ability to create an independent economy. Israel had kept the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a hostage market for its products, a market worth $ 2 billion, the second largest market for Israel after the European Union. There had been other reasons for maintaining the closures, well before the much-talked-about security considerations. After September 2000, the Israelis had gone overboard in enforcing the siege. The policy was to maintain separate societies within the Palestinian territory. Israel had always wanted to separate Gaza from the West Bank and maintain the two as totally separate economies and societies. Under Camp David, the West Bank would have been divided into four cantons, thus further separating Palestinian society.

43. In 1999 and 2000, despite all the restrictions, the Palestinian economy had managed to grow by 4 per cent. But since September 2000, the Palestinian people had lost 50 per cent of its gross national product. Sixty per cent of the people were below the poverty line and unemployment exceeded 65 per cent in Gaza and 45 per cent in the West Bank. There was no airport or harbour, and Israel allowed a very limited number of trucks in from Egypt and Jordan daily, and subjected them to fierce searches. Consequently, everything had to be imported from Israel, custom duties, sales and purchase taxes being collected by Israel. For that reason, 75 per cent of Palestinian revenue came from taxes collected by Israel. The Palestinian Authority was left with no fiscal ability to pay salaries, to pay for running schools, hospitals and municipalities. Without support from Arab and European countries, it would have been impossible to continue any institution of the Palestinian Authority.

44. Mr. Shaath referred to the two meetings of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which had asserted the applicability of the Convention to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and emphasized that the High Contracting Parties should use a range of possibilities to put pressure on Israel to comply with the Geneva Convention. It was not feasible to agree to a joint policy of all High Contracting Parties; however, there were means at the hands of every country, in particular European countries, to deal with Israel, including the freezing of agreements such as the Association Agreement of the European Union with Israel, interruption of regular flight services and freezing technology cooperation. The purpose was to demonstrate to Israel that violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention would not be tolerated. His preference, however, was to move forward to the peace process. But short of that being possible, there was no alternative to adopting measures to pressure Israel economically into complying with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

45. **Hadas Ziv**, Director of Projects, Physicians for Human Rights, Tel Aviv, pointed out that Israel had consistently violated the rights of the Palestinians ever since the occupation in 1967. Over the years there had been a steady escalation of the violations, one example being restrictions of movement. The closures, in particular those within the West Bank, so-called internal closures, had separated villages from central towns where residents worked and received education and health services. While the troops might

pull out of areas they had reoccupied, the closures had a tendency to become routine, examples of a policy aiming at completely destroying the civil infrastructure. She cited several instances to show that the violation of humanitarian law was continual. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society had joined in the appeal to the Israeli courts, but there had been no attempt to make soldiers observe the Geneva Convention. The reality was that regulations were not being implemented. When the situation deteriorated only ambulances were allowed on the road, but even they were delayed. Not one soldier had been brought to trial for violating rules of humanitarian law.

46. Her organization had repeatedly appealed to Israeli courts, including the High Court, to enforce the relevant articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The courts, however, accepted the State's explanations and avoided pursuing the enforcement of humanitarian regulations. She said also that recent court decisions were consistent with an ongoing tendency by the Israeli High Court, which had chosen to join the public consensus rather than subscribing to internationally accepted norms. Evidence had demonstrated that that stand taken by the courts had cost lives. She described the attitude of the Israeli army to ambulances and said that even UNRWA and Red Crescent ambulances, which had Israeli permission to travel, were shot at, resulting in one case on 4 March in which a doctor had been burned alive. As a consequence, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had minimized its activities in the West Bank, stating that the Israeli army had wilfully and brutally trampled on the rules of the Geneva Convention. Her organization had been unsuccessful in appealing to Israeli public opinion and the High Court had not taken any punitive action in 26 cases where humanitarian law had been violated. If the current situation continued, Israel would eventually become the victim of its own power.

47. **Karen Koning AbuZayd**, Deputy Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), said that the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory required from UNRWA substantially more activities. At the same time, many of its operations were hampered by Israeli blockades. UNRWA had to provide assistance to almost 80 per cent of the Palestinians. The assistance came primarily in the form of food but also job generation, a priority from the Palestinian standpoint. The most important assistance that UNRWA offered to the Palestinians was education and medical services. For the first time, however, there had been a high failure rate in the subjects of Arabic and mathematics. The Agency had been trying to help the children overcome the stresses and traumas that affected their development.

48. She said that while the Israelis might withdraw from some places, the curfews remained in effect in 23 towns. Palestinians could not leave their houses to get food or medical help. There were serious humanitarian concerns in many places. Many of those who suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure were unable to get medicine. Where the Israelis had not destroyed the water pipes, they had shot out the water tanks. Very few people were allowed to move. The Agency could not use its Palestinian staff, as any male between the ages of 15 and 55 was vulnerable to Israeli arrest. Gaza was often cut in two or three pieces to protect the settlements. Five thousand Israelis occupied 30 percent of the strip, compared to 1.2 million Palestinians, of whom more than 800,000 were refugees, living in the remaining area. Most of the staff was unable to get to work, so the Agency could not function. In the West Bank there were well over 150 checkpoints, including "flying checkpoints", which changed without warning. Israeli responses to UNRWA letters on the violations of the Geneva Convention claimed security considerations. Nevertheless, it was a question of collective punishment against civilians. She concluded that the money spent by the donor community for the past 50 years to build up Palestinian infrastructure would have to be spent again. Observers must be placed in the Palestinian Territory to monitor and look for violations of international humanitarian law. Only then would one be able to say where the terror was coming from, who were the occupiers, who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

49. **Seth Ackerman**, Media Analyst with Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) in New York, pointed out that because of the crucial role the United States Government played in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, United States public opinion was potentially a decisive element in the conflict. Since the vast

majority of Americans got their information about the Middle East from a few large, established news outlets, the way those organizations presented the conflict was of paramount importance. The United States media informed the American public about the Middle East selectively. While Palestinian rock-throwers, suicide bombers and militiamen were in full view on American television screens night after night, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land was almost ethereal in its absence. At the same time, the words "occupation" and "occupied territories" had become almost taboo for American reporters. Since the beginning of the current intifada, approximately 90 per cent of American television reporting on the occupied territories had failed to report that the territories were occupied. American news coverage put Israel's grievances on vivid display but maintained a studious silence on the grievances of the Palestinians. Media outlets tended to focus more on the Israeli casualties than those of the Palestinians. A FAIR study conducted the previous year had showed that even on the publicly financed National Public Radio (NPR), there was an 81 per cent likelihood that an Israeli death would be reported, but only a 34 per cent likelihood that a Palestinian death would be. NPR reported on 20 per cent of Palestinian children who had been killed. By contrast, 89 per cent of the deaths of Israeli children were reported on.

50. He suggested that one possible path that could lead to a change in the way Americans perceived the conflict would be a shift in the attitudes of the elite towards Israel. That could happen only if the Israeli Government defied the United States by causing grave and irreversible damage to United States strategic goals in the Middle East or globally. The shift in elite attitudes would be transmitted in the media coverage of the conflict, which would then affect public opinion. Another path would be the growth of popular mass movements in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Like the movement to end apartheid, a successful international solidarity movement could raise awareness of the plight of the Palestinians and effect a profound change in the attitudes of the United States public.

Plenary II
International efforts at containing the crisis and resuming the peace dialogue

51. In this plenary, experts discussed the role of the co-sponsors, initiatives of the European Union, regional parties and the non-aligned movement, and the permanent responsibility and engagement of the United Nations.

52. **Hanna Siniora**, Publisher, *The Jerusalem Times*, recalled that exactly 20 years after the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, events were being repeated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Whole families were being killed by the Israeli onslaught. Although the Israelis denied that there had been massacres, they had not allowed reporters to enter the affected areas. Eleven years after Madrid and despite the new Arab peace plan, Palestinians continued to suffer. As a result of the invasion of the cities, there had been three Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and, for the first time, stating that at the end of negotiations there would be a Palestinian State. The resolutions, however, had not been fulfilled. United States Secretary of State Colin Powell had a mandate to call for a ceasefire, a withdrawal of Israeli forces and the beginning of negotiations. None of those objectives had been realized. Despite President Bush's call for a withdrawal, the Israeli army was present in all the cities they had invaded. After Mr. Powell departed, Palestinians would be left with the siege of Bethlehem and President Arafat's headquarters. The occupation continued and there had been no further word from President Bush or Colin Powell demanding that Israel withdraw.

53. He referred to a recent visit by a European Union delegation to examine the situation, which had been rebuffed by Mr. Sharon. In the aftermath, there had been some talk of sanctions against Israel, but it did not lead to any concrete actions. He emphasized that without sanctions, Security Council resolutions would not be implemented, and he wondered why there was a double standard when dealing with the State of Israel. The Russian Federation had tried to meet with Chairman Arafat but had also been rebuffed. Israel had said that it wanted normal relations with the Arab countries, but when that was

offered by the Arab peace plan, the Israelis had responded by further invasions. The Palestinians wanted peace. They wanted Israel to withdraw to the borders of 1967, not to the mandated borders of 1947, thus accepting only 22 per cent of historic Palestine as their territory. He reminded participants that Area A, which was under the control of the Palestinian Authority, comprised only 3 per cent of the West Bank. Referring to Mr. Sharon's proposal of a regional conference to solve the issues, he said that the Palestinians would prefer a United Nations international conference based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, but added that the Palestinian leadership would consider all other options.

54. **Oleg Ozerov**, Deputy Chief of the Middle East Peace Process Division in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said his Government was deeply concerned about the unprecedented sufferings of the civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and particularly alarmed about the situation around some religious sanctuaries. Moreover, there were indications that the conflict was spreading to other areas of the region. The international community must do everything possible to stop the conflict from enlarging and urge restraint on all sides. Israeli use of force could not lead to peace or to security. Palestinians too must be aware that achieving political aims by means of terror was unacceptable and would not be supported. Only a real political process might lead to peace.

55. The major goal today was to immediately implement Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), which provided for a meaningful ceasefire and an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities. The siege of Chairman Arafat's headquarters must be lifted. He insisted that firing at residential areas, the demolition of houses and the destruction of historical and religious sites be stopped. Israel had to guarantee access for international humanitarian organizations and medical services. As soon as there was a ceasefire and pullout of Israeli forces, the Tenet and Mitchell scheme, accepted by both parties, should be implemented. Its merit was that it led to reinvigorating the negotiating process by providing an interconnection between security arrangements and renewed political negotiations. Palestinians would require international assistance to reconstruct their infrastructure, security services and capability. At their meeting in Madrid on April 10, the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations had transformed the "Quartet" into an authoritative international mechanism. For the first time, leading international mediators had declared that there must be immediate, parallel and accelerated movement towards near-term and tangible political progress.

56. **Markus Kaim**, Professor of Political Science, Friedrich Schiller University, Germany, said a consensus existed that Europe had not had the political will or inclination to directly struggle with the United States over the majority of issues dealing with the Middle East. Europeans tended to be vocal critics of what the United States did, or rather did not do, in the Middle East. The differing analytical approaches were a result of differing priorities and political orientations. Europe was more attuned to and affected by regional developments in the Middle East than was the United States. Regional stability occupied a higher priority on Europe's agenda than the peace process per se. The United States' deep engagement in the peace process was driven by the need to ensure Israel's security and its integration into the social fabric of the Arab arena. He said the United States was a single State actor while Europe existed as an economic and financial entity with no common foreign policy. While United States policies focused mainly on military and strategic objectives, Europe concentrated on the economy, culture and society and stressed multilateral approaches. Europe had played a major role in institution-building and reducing major imbalances in the Middle East. Without European financial aid it would be difficult for a Palestinian State to exist or be consolidated.

57. He called for a more activist European Union policy that should continue to promote Palestinian institution-building, developing the legal environment for private investment. It should strongly advise the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in multilateral talks, and it could help in the placement of military monitors in key positions such as the Golan Heights as part of an early warning unit or as monitors for a Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation. The Union could also secure needed resources in the region and

enhance regional cooperation, namely in the area of water and water management. For Euro-Atlantic cooperation to be successful in the area of Arab-Israeli peacemaking, an institutional mechanism needed to be set up to coordinate European Union and United States efforts. The United States must understand that it alone could not bring about a peace settlement. Moreover, there must be genuine unity in the European Union and it must be willing to cooperate with the United States. Finally, the Union must not only maintain its ties with Israel's Arab neighbours, it must improve its political ties with Israel.

58. **Joseph S. Joseph**, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of Cyprus, said the Middle East problems should be solved peacefully with an exchange of words, not the exchange of violence. Passion and revenge was dominating actions. The use of force was only complicating things and widening the gap between peoples and their leaders. The peace process had become the main victim of the violence. A crisis of that scale and the threat it posed to peace and security must not be ignored. The international community had the responsibility to take steps to end the conflict. It could provide useful guidelines in approaching the situation in a positive manner. It was time to develop a plan of action that was results-oriented. An international conference could be a useful setting to facilitate constructive interaction. Sending a multinational peacekeeping force was an idea worth promoting. The failures of the past should be a source of strength and not of discouragement.

59. He emphasized that the United Nations had always been available to provide a platform for political debate, a channel for communication and also to act as an instrument for legitimization and support for the peace process. Its Charter had always provided guidelines to preserve succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Israel would be in a better position to expect peace and security if it paid more attention to the messages coming from the international community. The European Union had a responsibility and a role to play in the Middle East and, he called upon it to assert its identity and role in the region. The European Union could do more to help restore hopes and expectations for peace among the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. The United States, having a special relationship with Israel, was in a unique position to play the leading role in supporting the peace process. At the end of the process, there should be the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Plenary III
The urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State

60. Speakers in this plenary examined the Oslo process and what could be next; elements of a permanent solution based on international legitimacy; and the issue of Palestinian statehood, as a key to peace in the Middle East.

61. **Peretz Kidron**, journalist and peace activist from Jerusalem, recalled that currently there were 38 Israeli soldiers in prison because they had refused to participate in the recent activities of the army and said that a thousand Israelis of military age had declared that they would refuse to take part in a campaign of repression against the Palestinian population. That was a significant number out of 6 million Israelis. Selective refusal was not an act of pacifism or conscientious objection. It arose out of a basic acceptance of army and military service and the fierce objection to some of the purposes to which the army was used. The movement "Yesh Gvul", the Hebrew colloquialism for "enough is enough", had been formed during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, on the basis of selective refusal. Israeli soldiers were responsible for their individual actions and could refuse to carry out an order that they believed to be illegal. Selective refusal thus became the focus of the Israeli peace movement. It was active in the first intifada, with some 200 soldiers imprisoned, although the number of actual refuseniks was much higher, but they were offered alternative duties. He opined that the political impact of refusal was a major element in the domestic pressure that forced the Government of Mr. Shamir to attend the Madrid peace conference. In the current intifada, the refusal movement had faced an uphill struggle, because an overwhelming majority of the Israeli public opinion had initially supported the campaign of repression against the Palestinians.

Mr. Sharon, despite his political record, had been elected Prime Minister with 63 per cent of the vote. Mr. Kidron said that a major factor in swinging public opinion behind the hardliners had been Palestinian acts and omissions. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians had had a major impact on the views of the Israelis. The Palestinian leadership had failed to mount a serious effort to win over Israeli public opinion. For example, although hundreds of Palestinians were fluent in Russian, the Palestinian leadership had never published any material in Russian or given any radio time to broadcasts directed at that community, which represented nearly 20 per cent of the popular vote and had suffered over one-third of the casualties in Palestinian attacks. That was the main reason that the Russian Israelis were among the most hawkish hard-line elements.

62. The refusal movement had to cope with enormous enmity. Refuseniks were denounced as traitors for refusing to take part in the so-called "defensive campaign". However, recent months had seen a change, with an increasing number of refuseniks, in view of the growing realization that Mr. Sharon's iron-fist policy led nowhere but to enormous suffering for both peoples and there was no hope of a military solution to the conflict. As long as national States existed, a national army had its legitimate functions of national self-defence. But when the army exceeded those legitimate limits, when soldiers were required to take part in acts of repression or aggression, that was the time to stand up and say "so far and no further".

63. **Steingrimur Hermannsson**, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Millennium Institute and former Prime Minister of Iceland, said he saw no difference between a Palestinian blowing himself up and killing innocent Israelis and the Israeli army shooting, throwing bombs or firing missiles at innocent Palestinians. In his view, both were terrorist acts. He noted, though, that there was a difference in ruthlessness and brutality, as he could not recall any previous intentional attacks on hospitals, ambulances, medical personnel and rescue workers like those carried out by the Israeli army. He expressed the view that Chairman Arafat had made a mistake in not accepting Prime Minister Barak's proposal at Camp David or at least by not making a counter-proposal. It might have proved difficult for both of them to return home with such an agreement, but it would have demonstrated their strong will to resolve the conflict. The most difficult issue was the demand for millions of Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their previous homes in Israel. That demand had become unrealistic, as after years of hatred and confrontation it would be an invitation to continuous violence within the borders of Israel. He suggested that the issue should be solved through international compensation and resettlement assistance. It might even be advisable for Israel to offer land to a Palestinian State for such a resettlement.

64. Mr. Hermannsson pointed out that settling the conflict in the Middle East was of primary importance for the future of both the Palestinians and the Israelis, but beyond that, it would be an important step in reducing broader regional and global tensions. The extensive coverage of the horrors taking place in the Near East had opened the eyes of many. Demands by European leaders for the killings and violence to end had become louder. In Iceland, there was fast-growing public support for the Palestinian people demonstrated by large outdoor meetings and gatherings organized by the Iceland Palestine Friendship Society. The Security Council resolution calling for an independent Palestinian State was an important step in the right direction. With Israel ignoring the Council's call for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian towns, there was no question that it should be punished, as several other countries had been when they disobeyed United Nations resolutions. Not doing so would show a double morality.

65. He characterized Crown Prince Abdullah's "land for peace" proposal, unanimously accepted by the Arab countries, as the most important step for settling the conflict. It was in accordance with United Nations resolutions and gave Israel its only hope for a peaceful existence in the Middle East. The United States held the key to the solution of the Palestinian tragedy, as without its support there was no future for Israel. He strongly believed Mr. Sharon did not want to give back any of the occupied territories but planned to drive militant Palestinians away and break down opposition by those who remained, to the

point that he could dictate a so-called peace agreement. The territories would be annexed, subdued Palestinians allowed to live in a few towns or enclaves, maybe within electric fences, without citizenship. If United States pressure on Israel failed to produce results, the Security Council should pass and enforce a ban on the sale to Israel of all military equipment and material, including oil. Economic sanctions should also be considered. United Nations observers and a peace force should be sent to the area. If the United States refused to go along and vetoed such action, the rest of the international community must act on its own with all punitive actions in its power. The land-for-peace proposal must be enforced. The two peoples must learn to live together in peace. He suggested that a joint assembly of the people be established on the ground where differences would be discussed and resolved.

66. **Sir Cyril Townsend**, Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU), said it was difficult for the Arabs to take seriously United States talk of ending the violence and establishing a Palestinian State, when it had such a biased record towards Israel. Prime Minister Sharon's attempts at isolating President Arafat to make way for a leader who would be more conducive to his idea of semi-autonomous Palestinian areas were totally unacceptable. He stressed that the Palestinians were a people whose collective national will could not be broken by force. Any collapse of the Palestinian Authority would be accompanied by a dangerous further destabilization in the region. The international community should ensure the survival of the Palestinian Authority, but in the long run the Authority must improve its record in terms of governance, democratic practice and human rights.

67. He rejected the notion that then Prime Minister Barak had made an unprecedentedly generous offer. President Arafat had rightly turned it down, but that decision must be explained, as a sceptical Israeli public needed convincing that that refusal was not a rejection of peace. He said that more could be done to win over a larger segment of Israeli society, which had no wish to occupy and oppress Palestinians. The suicide bombings inside Israel were not only repugnant but counter productive to the Palestinian cause. However, force, torture and massacres would not end those attacks. It was vital to address the economic imbalance between the two diverging economies. Without a massive boost to the Palestinian economy, there was the risk of prolonging the conflict and transforming a national conflict into a socio-economic one. He suggested that the economic viability of a fledgling Palestinian State would need to be safeguarded through some sort of Marshall Plan. It was in Israel's interest to assist that State rather than impede its development. The Palestinian economic and civilian infrastructure should be rebuilt with compensation from Israel. If the European Union had to fund the peace process once more, it must be provided with clear-cut political guarantees that its investment would not be undermined, as had happened with the damage inflicted by Israeli bombing on projects of an estimated €17 million.

68. He referred to the fact that even after the 1993 Oslo Accords, successive Israeli Governments had continued to expand settlements, and said that over 25 new settlements had been established since Mr. Sharon's election in February 2001. To kick-start a political process, the Mitchell recommendations must be implemented and a full freeze of settlement activity must take effect. The existence of the settlements and their massive expansion at the expense of Palestinian land and resources was a serious violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous Security Council resolutions. He warned that Israel's hold on the Occupied Territories might become irreversible if such policies were allowed to continue. Moreover, the hypocrisy of United States policy towards the Middle East as a whole should be adequately addressed to reach enduring peace and stability in the region. The international community, including the United States, should make real efforts to uphold the respective Security Council resolutions. Being selective in choosing who must obey those resolutions would only lead to further resentment in both the Arab and the Muslim worlds and would be perceived as further double standards in world affairs.

69. **Areti Demosthenous**, Director of the Institute for Historical Research for Peace and Lecturer at the University of Cyprus, said that in the electronic age, in which the coming together of people did not depend on distance, mutual understanding and cooperation of citizens from different backgrounds was

indispensable. Unfortunately, this was not achievable for many reasons: religion was often misunderstood; religious fanaticism was usually exploited by politicians; social inequality and poverty aroused people's indignation; history books caused confusion; and the media became victims of political monopoly. Historical thinking and comparative religious studies, however, could help people get closer to each other and thereby avert massive catastrophe. Historical thinking could be used as a tool to help comprehend current developments and predict future possibilities and probabilities by speaking out about former mistakes. Peace was unfortunately hidden by history, as children at school learned more about wars and national victories rather than about long periods of peaceful coexistence or the national victories of neighbouring countries. Historical thinking gave people a different perspective and helped to educate politicians, reporters, teachers, philosophers and others to avoid the wrong behaviour of the past and create a basis for mutual understanding. Comparative religious studies were also necessary. Currently, many people connected Islam with Jihad, or holy war; for others, Christianity brought to mind the crusades; the mention of Judaism and Islam together brought thoughts of the daily war in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. What was left ignored was the deeper meaning or philosophy of those three world religions.

70. Ms. Demosthenous noted that human beings instinctively feared the unknown. The unfamiliar person thus became the enemy, with whom any contact could prove dangerous. On the other hand, knowledge, which enlightened the mind, dispersed prejudices and promoted mutual understanding and trust, could decrease enmity and increase the social value of the formerly unknown person. The concept of tolerance was fundamental both in the Koran and the Bible. Comparative religious studies could contribute substantively to peace.

IV. Closing session

71. **Walter Balzan**, Rapporteur of the Committee, introduced the final document of the International Meeting, the Nicosia Declaration (see annex I).

72. **Christodoulos Pasiardis**, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, expressed the hope that the outcome of the International Meeting should be conducive to peace and stability in the Middle East. It was crucial to address the root causes of the tragic conflict, the occupation of Palestinian land and the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. He called for an immediate cessation of all acts of violence and called upon the parties to move towards the implementation of the Tenet Plan and the Mitchell Report. Any agreement emanating from the current crisis must be perceived by the peoples of the region as the permanent solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The international community should not allow double standards when violations of human rights were at stake. He emphasized that Cyprus, itself a victim of aggression and occupation, felt with deep sympathy the plight of the Palestinian people.

73. **Samir Abou Ghazaleh**, Representative of Palestine to Cyprus, informed the participants that, while the Meeting was drawing to a close, the efforts of United States Secretary of State Colin Powell to reach a ceasefire had turned out to lack success and the Israeli Government had chosen to continue its war against the Palestinian people. He called upon the United Nations Security Council to carry out its responsibilities by implementing its own resolutions demanding a halt to the Israeli aggression, to ensure an immediate Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps and to send an international force to provide the Palestinian people with protection. The Council should send an international commission of inquiry to investigate the crimes and massacres committed by the Israeli occupation forces, particularly in the Jenin refugee camp, and take immediate action to enable international humanitarian, health and relief organizations to carry out their humanitarian tasks. Participants should appeal to the international community, to Christian and Islamic religious bodies to intervene to end the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

74. **Papa Louis Fall,** Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, referred to the escalating spiral of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and commended the speakers of Plenary I for outlining the political, security and economic challenges facing the Palestinian people. As a positive note he highlighted the continuous humanitarian and fiscal assistance given to the Palestinians by the international donor community and the ever growing calls for international protection of the Palestinian people. He said that among the numerous initiatives to find a way out of the current crisis clearly standing out was the proposal of the Arab League Summit of Beirut outlining a widely welcomed vision for full peace in the region. He also highlighted the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1397 (2002), affirming the vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side within secure and recognized borders. He reiterated the view expressed by the participants that a permanent solution of the conflict required strict adherence to the norms of international law, as enshrined in international conventions and United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), as well as General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In conclusion, he conveyed the special thanks and gratitude of the Committee and all participants to the Government of Cyprus for hosting the International Meeting.

Annex I

The Nicosia Declaration

1. The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held in Nicosia, on 16 and 17 April 2002, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Participants in the Meeting included international experts, eminent political personalities, representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities, Palestine, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the media.

2. The Meeting was convened by the Committee with a view to contributing to international efforts at containing the current crisis and resuming negotiations for a political settlement. Broad participation was sought in order to mobilize support by Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In the course of the Meeting, the participants reviewed the current situation, evaluated international efforts aimed at bringing the conflict to an end, including current peace initiatives, and discussed the urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State.

3. The participants agreed that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory remained the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They expressed great alarm that the intensification of the conflict would bring even greater suffering and dispossession to the Palestinian people and would threaten the security and stability of the entire region. The participants noted that, since September 2000, more than 2,000 persons had lost their lives and tens of thousands had been injured. They felt strongly that the policies and actions of the occupying Power against the Palestinian people were excessively severe. The participants emphasized that the continued reliance of Israel on massive military force throughout the Palestinian Territory, the closures and the economic blockades, the incursions into and reoccupation of Palestinian-controlled areas, and all other illegal actions against the Palestinian people must be brought to an immediate end. They were much troubled by the relentless Israeli attacks against the Palestinian Authority, its institutions and its elected leadership. In that regard, the participants voiced their serious concern at the siege of Chairman Arafat at his Ramallah headquarters and demanded that it should be ended at once. They also demanded that United Nations Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) be implemented without delay and that Israeli troops withdraw immediately from all areas they had reoccupied in recent weeks.

4. The participants were particularly appalled by the unfolding human tragedy and the unprecedented level of destruction caused by the Israeli reoccupation of the Jenin refugee camp. They called upon the Government of Israel to facilitate humanitarian agencies' full and unimpeded access to the camp and for its fullest possible cooperation with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The participants were also greatly dismayed by the continuing siege of Bethlehem and expressed concern that the military operation could cause irreparable damage to the Church of the Nativity and other holy sites in the city.

5. The participants called upon the Government of Israel to honour its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and immediately terminate all acts of violence against innocent civilians, stop destroying civilian and personal property, and cease forthwith all other illegal activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including settlement construction.

6. The participants expressed their strong conviction that, if left to their own devices, the parties would not be able to reach a peaceful settlement. Peacemaking efforts by the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, now working in the framework of the "Quartet",

as well as by other international and regional actors should continue and should be intensified. In that connection, the participants welcomed the Joint Statement issued by the "Quartet" in Madrid on 10 April 2002. They agreed that, in order to secure a way out of the current impasse, it was absolutely essential to accompany security measures by progress on the political front and in the economic area. This combined approach should help the parties realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, as affirmed in United Nations Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002.

7. The participants urged the close involvement of the Security Council and were of the view that it should be sustained, for as long as it might be required, in order to prevent the crisis from sliding into an even more dangerous phase. They called upon the Council to exercise fully its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and to use all means at its disposal in order to have its resolutions implemented on the ground. They also believed that the political track should be reopened without further delay and pursued vigorously on the basis of the fundamental principles outlined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

8. The participants noted that the League of Arab States Summit had endorsed, on 28 March 2002, in Beirut, the important peace initiative put forward by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, which called for full Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations between the Arab countries and Israel. The participants viewed this initiative as a positive and constructive contribution to the overall efforts at achieving peace in the Middle East.

9. The participants welcomed the active involvement of the international community in efforts to contain the crisis and resume the dialogue. In that context, they expressed support for the vitally important mission of the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and his team and were hopeful that it would help restore calm and resume a political process, as called for by Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). They urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cooperate fully in the accomplishment of his mission.

10. The participants endorsed the idea of deploying some form of international presence to monitor a ceasefire once it was secured. They agreed that introducing an international force could be helpful for restoring confidence and for making headway in both the security and the political areas.

11. The participants reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to all the aspects of the question of Palestine, until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized.

12. The participants commended Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his consistent support of the rights of the Palestinian people and his untiring personal efforts in the quest for peace and stability in the Middle East. They also expressed appreciation for the important work done on a daily basis on the ground by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Office.

13. The participants noted the important role played by UNRWA in rendering varied humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees for over 50 years. In that connection, they strongly urged the international donor community to continue to support the vital activities of the Agency and contribute generously to its budget, in order to allow it to maintain the level of its services, especially under the current extremely adverse circumstances. They also called upon the occupying Power to take all

necessary measures to assist UNRWA in meeting the urgent challenges, to ensure the safety of the Agency's personnel and the security of clinics, schools and other installations and infrastructure.

14. It was reaffirmed that international donor assistance was of critical importance to the Palestinian people, particularly during the current period of great hardship caused by the prolonged violence, vast destruction of the Palestinian Authority infrastructure and other property, suffocating economic blockade, as well as by the refusal of Israel to transfer tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and withheld in contravention of signed agreements. The participants stressed that scaled-up international assistance was central to maintaining the viability and sustainability of the Palestinian economy and livelihood of the Palestinian population. It was of crucial importance for the donors to review their assistance programmes in order to develop quick, effective and efficient mechanisms of disbursing emergency assistance.

15. The participants acknowledged the increasingly important role played by civil society in providing emergency relief to the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, mobilizing support for the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

16. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, H.E. Mr. Papa Louis Fall, and the delegation of the Committee were received by H.E. Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and H.E. Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, both of whom stressed the importance of supporting peace in the Middle East at this extremely difficult stage and welcomed the efforts of the Committee in that regard. The Committee delegation expressed its deep appreciation of the active and constructive role played by Cyprus, a member of the Committee since its inception, in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

17. The participants also expressed gratitude to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for hosting the Meeting and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.

Nicosia, 17 April 2002

Annex II

Statement by the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
16 April 2002

On the eve of the opening of the Nicosia Meeting, organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Committee delegation learned with utmost dismay that the three Palestinian speakers invited from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to address the Meeting were not able to travel to Nicosia because of the general closure imposed by the occupying Power. The delegation of the Committee deeply regrets the absence of Mr. Kamal Al-Sharafy, Member of the Palestinian Council from Gaza; Mr. Gabi Baramki, President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace from Ramallah; and Mr. Issam Younis, General Director of the Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights from Gaza. In addition, a number of representatives of Palestinian non-governmental organizations invited to participate in the two meetings have been prevented from attending the events.

This arbitrary action of the Israeli authorities deprives the participants of the invaluable experiences and first-hand accounts of the situation that Messrs Al-Sharafy, Baramki and Younis could have brought with them. Their assessments of the current crisis and their thoughts on how best to resolve it could have been most useful and could have certainly enhanced the deliberations in the meetings.

The delegation of the Committee denounces the Israeli policy of closures and other forms of collective punishment of the Palestinian people. These illegal Israeli measures have affected in the most negative way the deliberations in the meetings and have disrupted the exchange of views on the critical issues of de-escalating the crisis and supporting Middle East peace. The Committee delegation urges the Israeli Government to desist from illegal policies that jeopardize the dialogue of the international community with the Palestinian people within the framework of United Nations conferences and meetings. Our Committee is also greatly concerned that such incidents, if continued, will seriously obstruct the implementation of the important mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

Annex III

List of participants

Speakers

Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd
Deputy Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine (UNRWA)
Gaza

Mr. Seth Ackerman
Media Analyst, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)
New York

Ms. Areti Demosthenous
Director of the Institute of Historical Research for Peace
Nicosia

Mr. Steingrimur Hermansson
Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Millennium Institute,
Former Prime Minister of Iceland (1983-1987)
Reykjavik

Mr. Joseph S. Joseph
Associate Professor of International Relations,
Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Cyprus
Nicosia

Mr. Markus Kaim
Professor of Political Science, Friedrich Schiller University
Jena, Germany

Mr. Peretz Kidron
Journalist, peace activist, Yesh Gvul
Jerusalem

Mr. Oleg Ozerov
Deputy Chief, Middle East Peace Process Division, Department of the Middle East and North Africa,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Moscow

Mr. Nabil Shaath
Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Palestinian Authority; Representative of Palestine
Gaza

Mr. Hanna Siniora
Publisher, *The Jerusalem Times* (BILADI)
Jerusalem

Sir Cyril Townsend
Director, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)
London

Ms. Hadas Ziv
Director of Projects, Physicians for Human Rights
Tel Aviv

Speakers of the United Nations NGO Meeting in Solidarity With the Palestinian People
Nicosia, 18 April 2002

Ms. Mercia Andrews
President, South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)
Pretoria

Mr. Don Betz
Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for NGOs
Oklahoma

Mr. Morad Ghaleb
President, Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO)
Cairo

Ms. Salwa Hdeib-Qannam
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Jerusalem Centre for Women
Jerusalem

Mr. Theocharis Papamargaris
Vice-Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
President, Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity
Athens

Ms. Hannah Safran
Co-founder, Coalition of Women for a Just Peace
Jerusalem

Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

H.E. Mr. Papa Louis Fall	Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, Chairman of the Committee and Head of Delegation
H.E. Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla	Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhâdi	Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Walter Balzan	Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Rapporteur of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Sotirios Zackheos	Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd
Deputy Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA)
Gaza

Governments

Afghanistan, Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Namibia, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia

Non-member States maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Switzerland

Entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Palestine

Intergovernmental organizations

European Commission
European Union
League of Arab States
Organization of the Islamic Conference

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)
United Nations Population Fund (UNPF)
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Special guests

AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People)
Arab Bank
New Horizons Political Party
Ms. Vera Polycarpou
Mr. Taufiq Dajani, General Manager
Mr. George Michaelides, Advocate

Non-governmental organizations

Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO)
Arab Lawyers Union
Arab Resource Collective (ARC)
Association Najdeh
Campaign for the Children of Palestine
Centre for World Dialogue
Coalition of Women for a Just Peace
Comité Internacional de Rescate (CIR)
Conselho Português para Paz e Cooperação (Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation)
Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)
Cyprus Peace Council
Cyprus-Palestine Active Solidarity
Cyprus Solidarity Committee with Arab People
Egyptian Solidarity Committee
Egyptian United Nations Association
European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity (EEDDA)
Greek Committee for International Détente and Peace
Indo-Arab Friendship Association, India
International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine
Jerusalem Centre for Women
National Peace Foundation
NGO Service Centre
Pancyprian Federation of Women's Organization (POGO)
Physicians for Human Rights
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
Society for Austro-Arab Relations
South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)
United Nations Association of Cyprus
World Federation of Democratic Youth
World Peace Council (WPC)

Media

Alfa TV, *Alithia* newspaper, Antenna TV, The Associated Press, Bayrak Radio/TV Corporation, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, *Cyprus Mail*, Cyprus News Agency, *Cyprus Weekly*, *Global Dialogue Journal*, Iraq News Agency, Itar-Tass News Agency (Russian Federation), Middle East Economic Survey, Mega TV, *Novaya Gazeta* (Moscow), Novosti Russian Information Agency, *Politiken Daily* (Copenhagen), *Politis*, Press Information Office, Reuters Cyprus, Sigma TV, *Swedish Press*, (Malmo), Swiss Broadcasting Corp., *The Times*, Union of Cyprus Journalists, Xinhua News Agency (China), Cyprus